

COCA Core Group : October 26th 2015

present : Stuart Johnson (SJ), Gill Lewis (GL), Caz Miles (CM) Gabrielle Sloane (GS) , Dave Thomas (DT) Gerald Miles (GM), Anthony Bullock (AB)

apologies : Nathan Walton (NW)

Noted: Anne Curran has withdrawn from Core Group due to pressure of work and other commitments.

1. **Minutes for September:** corrections : delete SJ from Action to measure field . Agreed
September minutes accepted with correction. Accepted.

2. **Growers Report:** September has been a fantastic growing month and field crops have responded. We are concerned that we do not have enough root crops or brassicas for the next six months hence bought in organic brassica plants for the first time in early Sept. All planted swiftly and have established well. (aim to be harvesting them in March/ April/ May). Onions all harvested and stored. Nothing to be done about the lost root crops now, and we must face buying in more veg than usual over the winter/spring periods. Potatoes being lifted. Salad crops outdoors are ending, but still enough for members. Badgers continued their havoc and cleaned out all the Parsnips and started on the Beetroot. Electric fence put round the rows temporarily to protect Beets and Carrots. Series of really good UNA volunteers and WOOFers did great work with weeding leeks and carrots, seedbed and helping with all the other tasks. Dry weather meant that Caz could clear and plough old crop ground, seeding with green manure. Caz took a 2 week holiday, with COCA work covered by Gerald, helped by Gill and Lesley.

ACTION carry on! Caz

2a **Badger deterrence:** it is unlikely to go away, so we must protect the root crops we have left. Need to buy COCA own electric fencer, stakes and wire with solar panel and battery. **AGREED.**

ACTION: GM to buy all the kit required as soon as possible.

2b **Renting the whole field** : at last meeting it was agreed to rent whole field to enable better rotation and soil management. Whole field is 5.2 acres, an extra 2 acres would be rented at £300 /acre/pa. Cost would be an extra £50/mth. ie £137/mth total. The tenancy would need to be updated?
AGREED provisionally to take on the extra land from March next year (if funds permit)

2c **Irrigation:** to enable the field irrigation to work properly, the feed from mains at the road relaid as a larger diameter pipe. Caerhys will pay half the cost (as it also feeds into stock water points. Pipe, JCB hire and fixings comes to £653 total. Work is in hand.

2d **next year's seed buying** : proposed to have a general informal pub meeting to invite members to help choose the crops and varieties to be grown next year. **ACTION** : GL

3. **Cartref COCA** : favoured by a long run of dry weather and the dedication of Andy Gill and several others the building has taken shape in about 2 weeks. Set back because the first bales bought were too loose and soft for the purpose, new bales were bought in, and the first lot have been sold. Roof trusses, ply sheet and then waterproof sheets were put on last week, and the whole covered with tarpaulin til the next stages can be done.

Finance is tight: £2.5K was transferred from No1 account to the CC account to cover costs. At present just £616 remains. Still need to buy new timber for soil boards, doors and window frames, estimated at £290 and other costs are still to be paid totalling c£380 so there is a shortfall and more finance is needed to cover fitting out. A minimum of £1000 needed.

AGREED : go ahead with finishing construction

AGREED: we must look for more money to cover final costs: crowd funding.? how to do this deferred to next meeting.

ACTION: DT continue with CC project.

4 **Promotions:** has GL done promotion to Solva? still not done (sorry) Did take a stall to Oriel Y Parc Harvest Fair on Sunday 25th. Covered the cost of the stall with a small raffle and “guess weight of the pumpkin” competition. Took 2 names of interested people.

5. **Membership** : no report from Dave L, but believe it stands at 55 in total, but with at least 2 leavers in the pipeline.

5.a Trial period for new Members. : there has been difficulty tracking joiners who take a trial month, Needs to be formalised.

AGREED : an extra line will be added to the joining form ... people taking a one month trial must still fill in the joining form and send to Mem Sec BEFORE GETTING THEIR VEG SHARE.

ACTION : DL to change the on-line Joining Form. to include month trial for cash,

ACTION : everyone : any other printed Joining Forms need to be amended.

5b 3 month notice of leaving : difficulty getting members to stick to the three month notice period when leaving. Notice of leaving must be given in writing/ email to the Mem Sec (not anyone else) .

The three month notice period : **discussion deferred to next meeting.**

6. Financial Report: First, AB has given notice that he will resign at the end of March. A replacement must be found, preferably before then. **ACTION** : everyone try to recruit a new finance volunteer

ACTION : AB to write a job description/ responsibilities

The two accounts together have a total of £5400 (approx) . Final accounts for Harvest Party showed profit of just under £2K. The loss due to unreturned beer barrels was severe, and it seems the brewery was not clear about their returns and collection plan. Lessons learned! Now that the Lottery Fund money has been spent on Cartref COCA, from Acc 2, money is being transferred from Acc 1 to cover further costs. Still keeping the 2 accounts open for now, for sake of clarity.

With all planned spending factored in for the next 12 months, funds are forecast to be zero by February. We *have* to reduce spending or increase income.

ACTION : All work groups to look at spending plans

6b. Utility Costs : **AGREED** : meter readings are taken every three months by GM, and then COCA pays for units, used in arrears. The £50 per month regular payments are stopped from end of October. Water bill has been paid.

ACTION: GM to read electric meters and pass readings to AB

7. Volunteers: proposed that next year COCA buys food for WOOFers rather than paying them £15 each per week. But as next year we will have two lots of resident volunteers (2 EVS and 2 from FOE) who will be paying for their own food we should keep the system as it is. UNA camp arrangements we may revise.

AGREED : carry on paying WOOFers £15 per week each plus any veg needed from farm.

7b cleaning caravans : much better with regular inspections.

ACTION : get a better Hoover.(DT offered one)

7c EVS volunteers. : interviews were held and 2 people offered the post : Agnes and Hugo. Michi will give EVA Host training to CM , DT and GL at future meeting tbc.

ACTION : DT arrange date with Michi.

Students will arrive in February, probably around 1st/2nd. In Cardiff for training for first few days and come onto us before Feb 7th.

ACTION DT continues to liase with Hugo n Agnes about dates.

A training/ work programme for the pair for their time at COCA should be devised, so that they have chance to learn about social enterprise/ csa/ veg growing in its entirety. At least one day a month on a visit out to another organisation

ACTION : GL to outline programme

8. Core Group membership and admin post: at present we are paying Caz for 20 hours per week and Rupert for 8 hours per week. Rupert's employment lasts only until the EVS volunteers arrive. in February. Has been agreed previously to have a paid part-time admin post as well, but the finances are worse than anticipated.

AGREED that the admin post should not be filled until we know COCA can afford it.

ACTION : SJ and AB to review financial forecast to see whether and when a paid admin post could be created.

8b. EVS volunteers are expected to be able to manage some of the admin, finance and promotional work, say 1½ days per week from March/ April onwards.

8c. Core is now looking for a new Membership Secretary, new Financial Secretary and new Events/Promotions person. Core numbers are at the lower limit of viability, we urgently need to recruit more participants.

ACTION : DT to advertise for such through web-blog and other social media.

AOB ;

i. **COCA's Carbon Footprint :** we have never seriously looked at the environmental cost of operating the csa. Something for the future? Meanwhile we should encourage members to reduce car journeys by co-operating to collect each other's veg shares. How to do that? A map in share shed and on web site showing where members live? People would have to give agreement to their contact data being shared.
ACTION : SJ.

ii. **Monthly Photo competition :** promote amongst the members ... subject being COCA of course. At end of the year we can make up a COCA Calendar. Great idea!

ACTION : DT.

iii. **Seeing where the money goes.** GM has had concerns that people think he is making a huge profit from all this ... salad sales, Harvest Party etc, and it is not transparent where the money gets spent. Miles family bears many of the hidden costs, such as driving to take volunteers to station or megabus, hosting them on trips to the pub and so on. Although all this is voluntary, it does need to be acknowledged by COCA.. How do we make members aware> Again about communication to members, ... needs to be more complete. Facebook, website, newsletters, events. **AGREED.** must try harder to communicate with members and local community.

ACTION: GL Newsletter for St Davids..

iv. **the brochure :** none left. needs to be revised. deferred to next meeting.

Work Day : Saturday October 30th : mostly for Cartref COCA (The Roof!) but also field work for families.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING : Monday November 23rd. Caerhys. 7pm for 7.15pm.

ACTION POINTS SUMMARY.

Stuart:

- meet with AB to review financial forecast and spending commitments. (ref: admin post)

Gill:

- organise pub meeting to select crops and varieties for next year.
- outline COCA training programme for EVS volunteers.

Gerald

- buy all the electric fencing kit required as soon as possible (to deter badgers).
- read all the electric meters and pass data to Anthony

Dave T :

- continue to lead on Cartref project, build and fund-raising
- donate hoover to the caravans
- arrange Host EVS training day with Michi
- liaise with Hugo and Agnes about their dates to join EVS and COCA
- advertise search for more Core members and Membership Sec and treasurer, through web etc.
- set up monthly photo competition (or find someone else to do it!!)

Dave L : change the on-line Joining Form. to include option of one month trial for cash

Anthony :

- write job description for a new Treasurer
- meet with SJ to review financial forecast and spending commitments. (ref: admin post)

Gabrielle : have baby!

Deferred to next meeting:

- further fund-raising for Cartref
- new design/ adapted design for brochure
- members' three month notice of leaving COCA